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Self-Discipline

A.C.A. HALL, M.A.

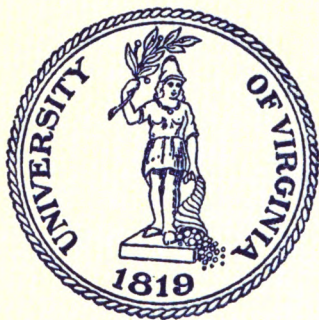


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SELF-DISCIPLINE

SIX ADDRESSES

BY

REV. A. C. A. HALL

MISSION PRIEST OF THE SOCIETY OF S. JOHN THE EVANGELIST



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TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND FREDERICK COURTNEY, D.D.,
LORD BISHOP OF NOVA SCOTIA,
AND
THE REVEREND JOHN S. LINDSAY, D.D.,
SUCCESSIVE RECTORS OF S. PAUL'S CHURCH,
BOSTON,
TO WHOM WE ARE INDEBTED FOR THE MID-DAY
SERVICES IN ADVENT AND LENT,
THESE ADDRESSES,
ONE OF SEVERAL COURSES DELIVERED AT THEIR REQUEST,
Are Dedicated
WITH TRUE REGARD AND AN EARNEST PRAYER
FOR AN ABUNDANT BLESSING ON THEIR
RESPECTIVE CURES.

P R E F A C E.

THESE addresses were given on the Fridays in Lent at the Noon Service at S. Paul's Church, Boston. They have been written out since delivery, in order to comply with the request of several who thought that in printed form they would be useful.

It need hardly be said that the short time at the disposal of the preacher at these services prevents anything like a full discussion of the subjects treated. At the same time, the necessary compression may make the book suitable for reading, whether in private, or by lay readers or hard-worked clergy in church.

The author would like to add one word of explanation. In carefully preparing sermons for delivery without manuscript, he is accustomed to make copious notes, and to preserve these notes for future use. He finds it, however, often

impossible to identify quotations which have been previously made from different books, and consequently he is frequently conscious of using, more or less freely, both the ideas and the words of others without being able to make a definite acknowledgment of indebtedness.

MISSION HOUSE OF S. JOHN THE EVANGELIST,
BOSTON. Holy Week, 1890.

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I.

SELF-DISCIPLINE.

- They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.—GAL. v. 24.

I PROPOSE to take for our consideration on the Fridays in this Lent, my brethren, the general subject of Self-Discipline, suggesting, if I may, some practical hints for the Discipline of the Body and its senses, the Tongue and its words, the Mind and its thoughts, the Heart and its affections, the Will and its decisions. These will form our special topics for the five following weeks. To-day I would call your attention to *two great laws* which apply to all true Self-Discipline—two general principles which must govern all our endeavors in this direction.

The two are closely connected—they might be reduced to one—but for the sake of clearness it may be helpful to consider them separately. It is through failure to recognize them that errors on the subject arise, whether in the way of perversion or of misunderstanding and prejudice. As so often happens, a Christian

truth is first perverted, and then, the caricature being taken for the original, it is rejected.

I. The first great principle, then, that we have to keep in mind when we speak of self-denial, is this—that it means *the sacrifice of the lower for the sake of the higher self*.

Self-denial must always have a purpose. We are not called in Lent, or at any other time, to an objectless starving of the body, to an aimless denial of natural desires, to a whimsical withdrawal from social intercourse.

Abstinence from earthly pleasures, of whatever kind, must always be with a view to something higher—an element of hungering and thirsting *after* righteousness. Self-Discipline is for the rescue of our true self ; for its development and culture.

We withdraw from distractions of one kind or another that tend to choke the higher life. The flesh drags down the spirit. Worldly sounds deaden the soul to the voice of God ; its passing sights dazzle the eye to the vision of higher spiritual realities ; general softness and luxury of living gradually benumb the spiritual faculties. You know it in your own experience. After a round of gaiety and excitement spiritual things are apt to seem unreal, prayer becomes dry and difficult. We need from time to time to retire within ourselves, to cultivate the interior life, to renounce the lower for the sake of the higher.

This is, as I said, the real object of all true Self-Discipline. You see it clearly in the case of the sensualist or the worldling. You bid him : *Be yourself*, your true self ; rise above poor, unsatisfying pleasures, such as belong to a grovelling or a butterfly existence, to what will give you true peace and contentment. The body is more than meat ; the mental life higher than the animal ; the moral more than the merely intellectual. Penetrate beneath the surface. What we *are* is of far more account than what we *have*. Let go of the phenomenal that you may lay hold of the essential ; sacrifice the transitory for the sake of the abiding. Self-discipline is to enable us all *to be ourselves*, to rise to our highest capacities and capabilities.

This law of a higher life gained through the death of a lower runs through all creation. Our Lord points to it in its simplest illustration when He says : "The seed must fall into the ground and die if it is to bring forth fruit." The silk-worm dies to its old life, and passing through the chrysalis stage rises to a higher, freer life as a butterfly. Did it cling to the old, it could never rise to the newer, better life. The law of physical nature has its counterpart in the moral sphere. "He that loveth his life shall lose it ; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it until life eternal." *

*S. John, xii. 24, 25.

The child who is always at play will be unprepared to fill his place in life. The man who is bent on gratifying his animal cravings is in greater or less degree incapacitated for mental advance. Those who are bent on securing worldly prizes of position, honor, wealth, at whatever cost, find themselves sooner or later obliged to forfeit their moral consistency and self-respect.

All this, you may notice, would be true—a necessary law of human progress—if there had been no such thing as the Fall ; if sin were, as some would have us believe, nothing more than the result of man's finite nature ; a privation only and not a contradiction of good ; merely a failure to attain our ideal perfection ; perhaps even a necessary step in our advance. Such theories are surely as inconsistent with reason and experience as they are incompatible with the teaching of Holy Scripture. "If sin were only inevitable weakness, if it were nothing more serious than a lowly condition in the scale of being resulting from man's physical circumstances, then the conscience of man would no more torture him on account of it than the conscience of the cripple or the blind accuses him of his misfortune."*

But at the same time it is well to remember that apart from the question of sin and the fall,

* Dr. Liddon, *Some Elements of Religion*, Lecture IV

the law of development requires the denial of the lower for the sake of the higher self.* Evolution proceeds on these very lines: it is the development of a new stage of being by the cultivation of higher faculties, and the letting others fall away. If sin then had not checked man's progress, his advance would be by means of self-discipline. Still more necessary does this become when our nature is disordered. God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions, and through disobedience has involved himself in disaster and ruin. Our being, as we know it, is tangled and earth-bound. We are deceived by appearances. A struggle is necessary to break away from the chains of habit by which we are held, to straighten out the tangle in which we find ourselves. We have to die to sin that we may live to God.†

II. And so we come to the second great law or principle of Self-Discipline. It is *for training*,

* I should like in this connection to refer to Bishop Thompson's most interesting and helpful *Bishop Paddock Lectures* for 1888, on "The World and the Kingdom." At the beginning of the second lecture, "The Struggle for the Mastery," Dr. Thompson quoting Gen. iii. 15, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," says: "Here is the revealed starting point of human history. Admit the mystery and the dimness of the making and the fall, here, at least, is a beginning which has a rational and scientific possibility."

† Rom. vi. 11.

not for destruction. Grace is to restore and perfect the nature which God has given. Christianity is at war only with the corruptions whereby our nature has been degraded. Christ, the Incarnate Son, recalls man to the true law of his being, as created by the Father. The supernatural is not the unnatural.

Christian Self-Discipline, then, means not the injury or mutilation of the body, but its subdual to the inner spirit that it may be its fitting instrument ; not the contradiction of reason, but its illumination ; not the crippling or stifling of the affections, but their purification and elevation ; not the annihilation of the will, but its strengthening and control. We are to rescue our faculties from their perverted use, to reclaim them to their true exercise, their higher purpose. For this discipline is needed. Neither in nature nor in art is perfection found in rank luxuriance. The most beautiful plants, the most fruitful trees, are not those which are allowed to grow in wild luxuriance, unpruned, untrained. That which beareth fruit is purged that it may bring forth more fruit.*

This is the secret of the discipline to which Almighty God subjects us, and which He calls us to exercise upon ourselves. It is the explanation of our Lord's life of hardness and self-denial,

* S. John, xv. 2.

when He came to restore our nature. His life of austerity and suffering was not merely propitiatory, offering satisfaction and reparation for our offences ; nor was it only in sympathy, that He might enter into all the experiences of His people. This it was, but it was more than this. It was also redemptive, breaking free, as our Leader and Representative, the Captain of our salvation, from the bonds which held man down to earth ; and it was exemplary, to teach us in what true greatness really consists—that it is not in what man *has*, but in what he *is*. So we see Him, the Son of Man, the ideal, the pattern man, living a life of poverty, of austerity, of abnegation, and we hear Him say : “ If any man will be My disciple, let him take up his cross daily, and deny himself, and follow Me.” *

In Him, indeed, all was in perfect harmony. The different faculties of that human nature, which was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, were all in perfect balance, in due and right proportion, according to God’s original design when He created man. But in Him there was an experimental learning of obedience by the things which He suffered.† In us there is the added necessity of subduing what is rebellious.

So the law is this : “ They that are Christ’s

* S. Luke, ix. 23.

† Heb. v. 8.

crucified the flesh, with its affections, or passions, and lusts."

Note the tense in the original. It is the aorist that marks a definite past time. "They *crucified*," when they became Christ's at their Baptism, accepting His yoke, submitting to His law, and engrafted into His Body, pledged to its law of life and receiving the grace of Baptism, which is none other than this, "A death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness." *

And mark the term, "*crucified*." In the kind of death our Lord suffered we have a pattern of the mystical death—the death to sin—in which we are to imitate Him and be made partakers of His sufferings. The Cross gives the law of our life; it is the symbol of Christian Self-Discipline, and that in three ways:

(1) Self-Discipline must be *universal*. As the cross affects the whole frame, every limb being stretched thereon, so we are pledged to mortify "all our evil and corrupt affections,"—the old man in all his workings. Remember this in Lent; it is a time for "self-denial." Do not let the term be limited to some little petty denials of your lowest self, in bodily appetite or ease. These are salutary, but they by no means exhaust the idea of "self-denial." It is all of self that is opposed to the will and love of God

* Church Catechism.

that is to be mortified ; all that is contrary to charity, the love of God above all, and of one's neighbor as one's self—of which we heard S. Paul's magnificent description read as the Epistle for the Sunday before Lent—all that “ seeks its own.”*

The “ flesh ” which they that are Christ's crucified means not the body only, but the whole of our fallen and unregenerate nature ; its works are envy and strife, as well as fornication, drunkenness and revellings.†

(2) A second feature in which the death of the cross symbolizes our death to sin in self-discipline, is that on which we have been dwelling. *It destroys nothing of our nature ; it trains every part.* No part of our nature is to be destroyed or lost. Not the block nor the stake, but the cross is the symbol of Christian self-denial. The whole being is brought under discipline and restraint—not to end in death, but that, rescued from perverted use, all may live unto God in newness of life.

(3) And once more : This is *a slow death*. Victims on the cross, we are told, often lingered many hours, sometimes days, before death came to put an end to their agony. And the old man in us dies hard. It is a life-long work to bring all our faculties into subjection to the obedience of

* 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

† Gal. v. 19-21.

Christ. Do not be discouraged because you do not find the work at once accomplished. "They that are Christ's crucified the flesh." The malefactor has been once fastened to the cross, doomed to death ; and then he is left to die.

Lent is a time to see that we are true to the law of our baptism : that the nails hold.

There is no salvation—no salvation such as we look for, not from sin's penalty merely, but from its power, *from* the cross merely, but *on* the cross.

II.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE BODY.

If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die : but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.
—ROM. VIII. 13.

LET me remind you at the outset of the two great principles governing all true Self-Discipline which we considered last Friday, and which have their application to our special subject for to-day, the *Discipline of the Body*.

The two great laws of Christian Self-Discipline are these : It is neither aimless nor destructive.

(1) Self-denial must not be formal and mechanical, without any ulterior end ; it is the sacrifice of the lower for the sake of the higher self.

(2) And so its purpose is to train and educate, not to destroy.

One word might express the twofold object of true, of Christian Self-Discipline—*Harmony*. It is to preserve or regain the true balance between the different elements of our nature ; to redress the disproportion which, as a matter of experience, we find to exist. It takes all our faculties

into account, and seeks to put each in its proper place.

I. Christian teaching concerning the duty, the necessity of bodily discipline, proceeds not from any contemptuous disregard of the body, as if the body were a mere temporary casement, a shell from which we had as soon as possible to break free, in order that the spirit might live its true life. Such perverted notions of asceticism there have been both within and without the Church; but they are clean contrary to all true Christian thinking, to the religion of the Incarnation and the Sacraments.

The Christian believer cannot but honor the body as an integral part of man's complex being, the work of God's hands, the Creator of all things in heaven and on earth, material as well as spiritual. The Christian believer must honor the body as redeemed from degradation and restored to its true dignity by the Incarnation of the Eternal Son; "the Word was made flesh"—conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the substance of the Virgin Mary; as sanctified moreover by the Holy Ghost, the shrine of His indwelling presence, Who in many ways appeals to our inner being through our bodily nature, and confers on us the highest gifts of spiritual grace through material channels.

The body we Christians are taught to recognize as an integral part of man's nature, the

“organism through which the soul receives its impressions and does its work.”* You will notice how harmonious this teaching of Christianity is with what we learn from modern science of the very close connection between the spiritual and material elements of our being. Such exceeding intimacy, such difficulty of separation, may surely be taken as a natural presumption in favor of the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The body, as the divinely-designed companion and instrument of the spirit, will share its destiny. Our bodies will rise again, in however greatly changed condition, the present body of our humiliation made like unto the body of our Lord’s glory, according to the mighty power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.†

It is because we honor the body, because we are bound to glorify God in body as in spirit, since both are His,† that we are bidden train and discipline the body.

II. And this is the meaning of S. Paul: “If ye live after the flesh—according to its impulses and desires, for its gratification, there is nothing for you but to die (this would be the meaning of S. Paul’s words in the original — μέλλετε ἀποθνήσκειν). The lower will weigh down, smother, crush out the higher life. But if ye

* Prof. Momerie.

† Phil. iii. 21.

‡ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

through the spirit—asserting the supremacy of your higher nature, which the Spirit of God moreover controls and animates—do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

The unexpected antithesis may strike you as strange. S. Paul does not repeat in the second clause the term “*flesh*,” but substitutes “the *body*.” The change, we may be sure, was not for the sake of avoiding a tautological expression; he says deliberately “the deeds or doings of the body.” He means such acts as have the body not simply for their instrument, but for their independent author, in which it withdraws from the dominion and control of the spirit, the rightly ruling element. In all the acts of life (down to eating and drinking, which the Christian is to do to the glory of God*) the body should not guide, but be guided. Every act of sacrifice whereby the independence of the body is denied, and its submission to the spirit forcibly asserted, secures a growth of spiritual life in man.†

This expression, “the deeds of the body,” thus understood, makes clear to us what is the essential evil of fleshly lusts, of bodily indulgence. It consists in letting the body lord it over the spirit. Our bodies are given not to be

* 1 Cor. x. 31.

† See Godet, Epistle to the Romans, on the text.

instruments of pleasure, but as tools for service. A certain pleasure, it is true, is attached to the right and proper exercise of every faculty of our being, physical and mental. It is so with the mental powers. The orator experiences a pleasure in the sense of swaying the audience that hangs upon his words; the man or woman of force in the conscious power of influence. But to use such gifts simply for the sake of the reflex gratification to one's self would indeed be base and prove one unworthy of the trust. It is the same with regard to the body. There is a pleasure attached to the taking of food and drink; to the taking of rest in sleep for the recuperation of our powers; to other bodily functions. The sin comes in when this pleasure, instead of being regarded as incidental, is sought after as an end in itself, without thought of the real object and purpose for which the functions are intended.

Then we have the sin of Gluttony, of Sloth, of Lust—the abuse of those noble powers designed for high and sacred ends, which God has given for the transmission of life, by which He makes men and women fellow-workers with Himself in His creative energy.

You see the meaning of “the lusts of the flesh,” which we renounced at our baptism—every one of us, remember, not those only who were born in unfortunate circumstances or who inherited special tendencies to vice. Think not

that the flesh is an unreal or imaginary foe for any. S. Paul, long after his conversion, after many years of apostolic toil, after having been caught up into Paradise, where he heard words which he could not repeat here below, still found it necessary to keep a strict watch against temptations of the flesh; he kept under his body and brought it into subjection, lest that by any means, after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway.*

There is need, then, for the exercise of bodily discipline, to keep under, as a servant, that which is in danger of becoming a master.

We have to learn to say No—to deny ourselves from time to time in innocent pleasures, that we may be able to say No at once and stand by it when pressed by temptations to what is unlawful. There can be no need to insist further upon this. Only in this connection I would give two hints.

(1) When we see continually around us, and sometimes very near us, such sad wrecks of what seemed fair and promising lives through bodily indulgence, through drink and drug and lust, does not the thought suggest itself that a more systematic training of the young in discipline of the body might have helped some to preserve their bodies in temperance, soberness,

* 1 Cor. ix. 27.

and chastity ? May not our scornful disregard of asceticism in any and every form, our practical ignoring of one of the three great duties of religion which our Lord classes together in the Sermon on the Mount—prayer, fasting, and almsgiving—be in part accountable for such sorry wrecks ?

(2) Then there is another warning which we must not pass by. Apart from aught that is *gross* there is *a living in the senses*, a taking overmuch satisfaction in refined and delicate bodily delights, which saps spiritual vigor and dims the keenness of spiritual perception.* This surely

* Compare Olshausen on S. Matt. xviii. 8, 9 : “ Hand, foot, eye here appear to be used by the Saviour to denote mental powers and dispositions, and He counsels their restraint, their non-development, if a man finds himself by their cultivation withdrawn from advancing the highest principle of life. The every-sided development of all our faculties, the inferior as well as the more elevated, is certainly to be regarded as the highest attainment ; yet he who finds by experience that he cannot cultivate certain faculties—the artistic, for example—without injury to his holiest feelings, must renounce their cultivation and make it his first business, by painstaking fidelity, to preserve entire the innermost life of his soul, that higher life imparted to him by Christ, and which, by the dividing and distracting of his thoughts, might easily be lost ; nor must it give him any disturbance if some subordinate faculty be thus wholly sacrificed by him. Assuredly, however, we must add that this loss is only in appearance ; for, in the

is a danger amid the growing luxury and softness of our day. The advance of material civilization does not necessarily mean greater refinement. There is a danger lest with the "plain living" of a former generation the high, the really "high thinking" may disappear. Let us take care that we do not ignore and run counter to that great law of evolution, the steps of which have been graphically traced by Mr. Fiske, who sums up his treatment of the gradual development of man's nature from that of beings lower in the scale of creation thus :

"In its rude beginnings the psychical life was but an appendage to the body ; in fully developed humanity the body is but the vehicle for the soul." *

III. I can but touch on another aspect of bodily discipline. The body we have seen to be the instrument through which the spirit receives its impressions, as well as through which it expresses itself. Now, one great educational factor we know to be suffering. The endurance of pain has a refining influence upon our nature if rightly accepted. Do not let us, then, be too hasty in seeking to escape all bodily pain. Many

development of man's higher life, everything of a subordinate kind which he has sacrificed is again restored with increase of power."

* *Destiny of Man*, end of Chapter VIII.

sufferings which come to us entirely from without—in loss, bereavement, misunderstanding—we cannot avoid. Do not be too free and thoughtless in the use of anodynes and anæsthetics for freeing yourself from that which comes through the body.

IV. Once more. There is a positive side of bodily discipline. The body is not only to be restrained from unlawful pleasure and trained for the endurance of pain ; it is the instrument for the spirit's active service. We would rescue it from abuse in order to dedicate it to its true and intended use. Among the Capital Sins (those seven great heads of moral evil, under one or other of which all sins may be classified) there are three that have to do with the body—Gluttony and Lust, which tell of the body's wrongful use, and Sloth also, which is the sin of its wrongful disuse. The body not only drags us down to unlawful deeds : it also holds us down from true pursuits. How often have prayers and spiritual exercises, works of mercy, and the duties of our station, been neglected through indolence, through overmuch love of bodily ease, through late rising!

The Collect for the first week in Lent, you will notice, brings before us the positive side of bodily discipline. We pray of our Lord that our flesh may be so subdued to the spirit that we may ever obey His godly motions—not

merely restraining us from evil, but prompting us to good works.

For many it would be a most valuable practice in Lent (tending, as all such Lenten rules should, to the formation of habits of Self-Discipline) to fix a definite time for rising every morning—a little earlier than has been customary—and to keep steadily to this, the hour being fixed with a view both to secure proper time for sleep, and proper time for prayer before the other duties of the day begin. Only then (to be quite practical) I must remind you that (sleep being as necessary as food and quite as important in our hurrying life with all its nervous strain) if you are to rise early and at a fixed hour you must have a fixed time for retiring. John Wesley somewhere says that among all the lusts there is none more dangerous than “the lust of finishing.” Is it not so? It is so easy to go on with some work which we began perhaps as a duty, when the time for another duty has come; so tempting at night to continue the book, or the paper, or the conversation, or the game, until not only the time for your prayers is passed, but you are altogether worn out and unfit for prayer. Here again may be a practice of Self-Discipline.

Remembering then the dignity of the body as the instrument of the spirit, practice Self-Discipline—in learning to say No, in enduring

hardness, and in the diligent, active performance of duties. Thus "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." *

* Rom. xii. 1.

III.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE TONGUE.

In many things we all stumble. If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also.—S. JAMES, III. 2 (*Revised version*).

SOME of you will be familiar with the story of the young man about to enter on the exercises of a spiritual life going to an aged servant of God and asking him for a rule. The old man opened his Psalter and read the first verse of the thirty-ninth Psalm: "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue." "Stop," cried the young man as the other was about to proceed; "when I have learned that I will come and receive further rules." At the end of six months he was asked whether he was yet ready for other lessons. "Not yet," he replied; "I have not yet learned to practice the first." And so again at the end of a year. At the end of five years he said he had no need of other rules, for, having learned that first rule, to master the tongue, he had gained discipline and control over his whole nature.

Now this is exactly what S. James means in the text—"If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also." He who truly masters his words will also master his works. The Apostle, you see, shews the supreme importance of that element of Self-Discipline which is our special subject for to-day, the Discipline of the Tongue. S. James gives both an admonition and a promise.

For our *warning* he sets before us the difficulty of bringing this unruly member under control. "In many things we stumble, all of us"—in word, if not in deed. Many who keep their hands pure are careless of their tongue. Many who have conquered—or have not been specially tempted to—sins through indulgence of sense, offend wofully with the tongue as the organ of speech. Of the sum total of our transgressions, to how large an item do our sins of word run up!

And then for our *encouragement* the Apostle tells us that if we can accomplish the work of holding this one rebellious faculty in subjection, then all will be easy. The opportunities are so frequent, the temptations so many and various, the difficulty, as is proved by experience, so great, that self-conquest here implies a power of self-control in all other respects. If we could suppose the case of a man who never

stumbled in word, that man would be a perfect man.

S. James goes on in this chapter with three illustrations, two of them intended to show us what mastery may be gained by Self-Discipline in this respect, the other to warn us of the alternative danger, how the evil may easily spread beyond our power to quell.

(1) "We put the horses' *bridles* in their *mouths*," he says, "and we turn about the whole body"—intimating the seat of the mischief he is deprecating.

(2) Again, he points to the little *rudder* by which a great ship, though driven with fierce winds, is steered and guided according to the will of the helmsman. We see one small member controlling a great body. But the small member must itself be controlled; otherwise its very power becomes a source of danger and disaster.

(3) So there follows the third illustration—the image of a *forest fire*. Sweeping over a vast tract of country, defying all efforts to extinguish it or stay its devastating advance, it spreads desolation all around. And it originates in a little spark, carelessly dropped, it may be, by a traveller, or by some camping party, or thrown out by a passing engine. "Behold how small a fire kindleth how great a forest." "And the tongue," the Apostle continues, "is a fire, that world of

iniquity—containing a whole world of mischief—setting the world aflame, and itself kindled at Gehenna.” “A little member boasting great things,” with wonderful capacity for good or evil.

Is not this indeed an apt illustration of the incalculable mischief that may result from words, I do not say maliciously but, idly spoken? Think of the party spirit fanned; the anger and heat which is provoked; the suspicion suggested; the evil report spread; the scandal circulated; the dissolving of friendships; the widening of a breach that might have been healed—all through reckless, thoughtless, idle speech!

We understand the force of the other great passage in this same Epistle of S. James dealing with the guard of the tongue, and setting forth its absolute necessity. “If any man think himself—or claim to be—religious or devout, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man’s religion is vain and unreal.”* The warning here is not against hypocrisy—acting a part before others—but against self-deception. Such an one, S. James means, must surely be deceiving himself in this particular. He must think that he is guarding his speech, bridling his tongue; only he finds excuses—as we

* S. James, i. 24.

do—and thinks there is some valid reason for his ill-natured, meddling words.

Indeed, the resolution is forced upon us, "I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not in my tongue;" the prayer suggested, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips." *

When we speak of the guard of the tongue, it is important to distinguish between (a) sins committed *in* word, in which the tongue is the *instrument*, but where the root of the evil lies deeper, and (b) those which are more properly sins *of* the tongue—those, I mean, which spring more or less directly from an unrestrained habit of speech, from overmuch talkativeness, of which the unbridled tongue is the *cause*.

(a) There are sins *in* word which are to be attributed to a deeper fault of character, though manifested through the tongue. Words express our thoughts. Thought, as we shall see next Friday, is the life-blood of our moral being. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." This is the explanation of our Lord's declaration, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." † Speech discloses character; it is the utterance of our mind.

The proud man will naturally speak vain,

* Ps. cxli. 3.

† S. Matt. xii. 34, 37.

boastful words. Self-love "behaves itself unseemly."* Puffed up with self-conceit, it seeks to press its own opinions on every one that it can get to listen.

The envious person will give vent to disparaging, slanderous words of one who is thought of as a rival.

The profane will delight in irreverent speeches; the impure heart in indelicate allusions, in going to the verge of wrong; the untruthful will fall into exaggerations; the hot-tempered into hasty and impatient speech.

Doctors look at the tongue. The appearance of that organ is an indication of the state of health, moral as well as physical.

(b) But we are concerned now more particularly with sins *of* the tongue, which arise from the much talking in which there wanteth not sin. How many sins of this kind there are, against God and against our neighbor! Against God, for instance, the light discussion of sacred things, by which their bloom is rubbed off, and the impression of sermon, or sacrament, or individual experience is talked away. Against our neighbor, the words of detraction or of gossip, based on imperfect information, and spoken with little consideration; the violations of confidence into which talkativeness frequently be-

* 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

trays people. All these come under the head of "idle words,"* which do not fulfil the purpose for which the gift of speech is bestowed ; words bubbling up and boiling over.

Let me then give *three rules* for the practice of Self-Discipline in the matter of speech—for bridling the tongue.

(1) First this: *To repeat evil or speak disparagingly of no one*, unless duty or love to some other require it. The matter may be true. Very likely it is exaggerated or colored, or there may be several circumstances that ought to be taken into consideration. In any case, it is something to be deplored. There is no need to repeat it, and spread the knowledge. We should have a tender care for another's name. You would not wish such a story to be circulated concerning you, on such slight authority, or if true to be published. If you think that others are talking you over you feel as if you were suffering martyrdom and being burned alive. Speak of others as you would that others should speak of you.

There are cases where we have a right, a duty, to warn others concerning some one's wrong-doing. Then it is to be done as a duty, not hastily and lightly, but with a sense of the difficulty and delicacy of the task. Some one said: "I used to ask myself, *May* I repeat

* S. Matt., xii. 36.

this ? and I always found an excuse ; now I say, *Must I ?* and I seldom find it needful."

(2) *Show your disapproval of idle talk.* Avoid gossip, and gossips—unless you can reclaim them. Gossip, you may remember, S. Paul traced back to idleness. The younger widows, he warned Timothy, were apt to "learn to be idle, going about from house to house ; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." The remedy prescribed by the Apostle was that they should be well employed. He counselled that they should "marry, bear children, rule the household." * May I, after the Apostle, quote De Tocqueville's cynical description of worldly intercourse ? "The duties of society," he says, "may be defined as an obligation existing in civilized society of mutually boring and inconveniencing each other." † Is it not a shame that such a description should apply with any degree of truth to Christian society, and in an age that boasts of its enlightenment ? We can surely provide interesting, useful, healthy subjects for conversation. The weather is a great deal better than your neighbor's character.

(3) *Sometimes practice silence.* This rule is

* 1 Tim. v. 13, 14.

† *Correspondence*, Vol. II. p. 303. Quoted by Mgr. Landriot, *Sins of the Tongue*, p. 84.

suggested by S. James' expression, "stumble." If your horse is apt to stumble, you keep a tight hand ; you do not drive with a slack rein. And we being very apt to stumble in word must bridle our tongue. Do not be always forward to speak. Cultivate a recollected, quiet, restrained manner. Think before you speak. Train the faculty of speech for its high and sacred function. This, like all our powers, is to be claimed for God. Remember the dignity, the grandeur of the gift of speech, whereby we communicate our thoughts to others—the image in man of the Word of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the perfect expression of the Father's Mind.* And remember its highest function: "Therewith bless we the Lord and Father;" can we therewith also "curse men, which are made after the likeness of God?" God forbid.

"A word in due season, how good is it!" † a word of humble reproof, of kindly cheer and sympathy, of instruction and guidance.

"If there is that speaketh like the piercing of a sword, the tongue of the wise is health." ‡

* S. John, i. 1-3. Heb. i. 2, 3. † Prov. xv. 23.

‡ Prov. xii. 18.

IV.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE MIND.

Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.—2 CORINTHIANS, x. 5.

No one can fail to recognize this great distinguishing feature of the Christian religion, the penetrating character of its rule. It claims to regulate not only man's outward actions or his spoken words, but his inward thoughts, desires, motives. With these, indeed, as the spring of action, Christian morality is chiefly concerned. It is not enough, we are warned, to cleanse the outside of the cup and the platter, to secure an outward respectability of word and deed ; truth is required in the inward parts.* Christ deals with evil, and would have us deal with it, not only when it comes to the surface, but in its hidden springs and sources. God who seeth in secret trieth the reins and heart.

A considerable portion of the Sermon on the Mount, "the Statute-Book of the Heavenly Kingdom," is taken up with insisting on this impor-

* S. Matt. xxiii. 25 ; Ps. li. 5.

tance of the inner life. Let me remind you of a few illustrations of this on both what we may call its positive and its negative side.

(a) In the prohibition of evil Jesus Christ warns us that the observance of the law in outward conduct is not sufficient. With regard to both the sixth and seventh commandments it is not, He tells us, only the outward and literal breach of the law of marriage fidelity and of respect for human life that is forbidden. The unbridled desire, the look of lust, the allowed feeling of hatred within the heart, are as real and true—though not of course as grievous—breaches of God's law of purity and love as are actual adultery and murder.* “Guard well thy thoughts, for thoughts are heard in heaven.”

(b) Further on in the Discourse the converse of this is set before us. In respect of virtues we are warned that the absence of a true motive, of purity of intention, will rob our actions of all merit and acceptance before God. In prayer and religious exercises in general, in fasting and all forms of self-denial, in almsgiving and works of mercy, we must not be as the hypocrites, performing our actions to be seen of men. Otherwise we lose our reward of our Father which is in heaven.†

* S. Matt. v. 22, 28 ; comp. 1 S. John, iii. 15.

† S. Matt. vi. 1-18.

Our poverty must be poverty *of spirit*, if it is to gain the reward of the heavenly kingdom ; our purity must be purity *in heart*, if it is to fit us for the vision of God.*

II. Now the explanation of this treatment of thoughts by our Lord is to be found in the consideration of man's true nature. The body through which he acts is necessary to the integrity and completeness of his being, but not to its essence. Man's real self is spiritual and immaterial. And so *thought is real action*, the action of our inner being, our true self. "Action," as we speak of it, is only the carrying out still further into outward circumstances of the already completed act within. Thought is the life-blood of the soul ; it is co-extensive in all men with the soul's true life.

(1) This at once suggests a hint of value for self-examination. Our thoughts are the best criterion of our spiritual and moral life. Look then to what your thoughts naturally revert ; to what subjects they wander off in prayer, or at other times, when, as you say, you are not thinking of anything in particular ; your first waking thoughts ; your last thoughts at night ; of what do you catch yourself unconsciously thinking ? Is it of schemes of worldly ambition ; or of thoughts of vanity concerning yourself and your

* S. Matt. v. 3, 8.

own importance ; or of mere frivolity and pleasure ; or of self-indulgence and shame ? Or are they better, nobler thoughts that naturally suggest themselves—endeavors for others' good, the grateful remembrance of the many blessings you have received, the penitent recollection of your own faults ? See what is the natural current of your thoughts, the drift of your life. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*

(2) Many sins, remember, require no external expression, scarcely perhaps allow of any outward manifestation. Words of blasphemy and unbelief, of lasciviousness or slander, of boastfulness or complaining, may be restrained by laws of good taste, by the conventionalities of society, while the evil may be rampant within.

(3) Moreover, every sin afterwards expressed in word or carried out in action has been first a sin of thought. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."† It has first been chosen, willed, and then it is executed. This it is which accounts for what often is to us so strange, startling, and unintelligible—the phenomenon of seemingly sudden falls from virtue. A person of good reputation, of high standing in

* S. Matt. vi. 21.

I am conscious of being greatly indebted on this subject to a sermon of Dr. Liddon's, preached and published many years ago in a course of Lenten Sermons at Oxford.

† S. Matt. xii. 34.

society, an attendant at church, perhaps a communicant at the altar, a minister of the Word and Sacraments, is overtaken by some grievous fault, is guilty of fraud, or gross impurity, or suicide, or apostacy from the faith. We are amazed. We ask the explanation of such a sudden fall. The answer is, It was not really sudden. The temptation had been dallied with; the possibility had been considered; the advantages weighed. The mind had been familiarized with the thought. The horror which at first the bare suggestion excited had faded away. Desire when it had conceived brought forth sin.*

What need then to "guard the heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" and death.†

III. So much concerning the importance of Thoughts. But here, perhaps, a difficulty arises in some minds, a question as to our Responsibility for our Thoughts. "Their importance, the effect and influence of them, I acknowledge; but can I discipline them?" one says. "Are my

* S. James, i. 15.

See Martensen's *Christian Ethics (Individual)* on "Temptation and Passion," p. 87 (Clark's Translation); and compare Pope (*Essay on Man*, ii. 219, sq.):

"Vice is a monster of such hideous mien
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

† Prov. iv. 23.

thoughts really voluntary, and within my control? Do not they follow one another by a law over which I have no power—suggested by all sorts of external circumstances? Oftentimes my thoughts—proud, impure, unbelieving, envious, censorious thoughts—are hateful to me. I am ashamed of them. But can I help them?”

Yes, to a very great extent, you can. Our thoughts are almost as much within our control as are our actions or our limbs, so far as morality goes, so far that is as virtue and vice, right and wrong, are concerned.*

(1) For notice this, that *though we cannot prevent we can repel*. We may be unable to prevent evil thoughts being suggested to us; we cannot altogether choose what shall come before us; but we have the power of willing or not willing to dwell upon them. Temptation is not sin. Their suggestion does not involve our consent. Evil thoughts of one kind or another may flit through the mind of a good man; it is only the bad man who welcomes them, dwells on them, recalls them, takes pleasure in them.

(2) Moreover, we can choose on which side, in what aspect, to regard any thought that is presented to us. For instance, whether we will

* I may refer to a sermon on “Government of the Thoughts,” in the late President Walker’s volume of *Sermons preached in the Chapel of Harvard College*.

regard some temptation simply as an indulgence, or as a sinful indulgence ; whether in some matter of wrong-doing we will regard it as an injury or annoyance to ourselves, and so allow our vexation to be stirred, or as an offence against God, an injury to the wrong-doer, in which case our pity rather than our vengeance will be excited.

(3) Then again the effect which objects presented to us produce in us depends in very great measure upon the character and disposition in which they find us. "To the pure all things are pure ; but to them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled." * They see or imagine evil everywhere.

IV. This leads naturally to the suggestion of some simple *rules for the discipline of the mind and its thoughts*—such as follow from what has been said, and are the outcome of experience.

(1) *Banish at once* the evil thought. If you cannot prevent its being suggested, you can instantly repel and refuse admittance. Slam the door in the face of such an intruder. Do not dally with the temptation, do not stop to argue with it ; do not even, at the time, when under the pressure of temptation, dwell upon its evil. Simply say : This thought of pride and self-conceit, of unbelief or immodesty, of anger, im-

* Tit. i. 15.

patience or censoriousness, is something that I have renounced ; it is not for me. Act as you would with a spark that should light upon your dress. It might you know easily be fanned into a blaze ; in any case it would leave an ugly scar. Brush it off at once.

(2) Then, secondly, we are wont to declare that "Prevention is better than cure." And so we must take care *to avoid all that suggests evil to us*. The senses are avenues to the heart. We must guard the outposts if we would preserve the citadel. The eye and the ear carry impressions to the heart. How much of the evil that rises up within us we can trace to past indulgence in hurtful conversation, in criticism and idle discussion, that leaves the heart less loving, the faith less clear. Thoughts have been stored up in the memory, and now they come forth unbidden when we would fain be free from them. How careful then should we be to check the curiosity which is so fruitful a mother of evil, the source of so much misery ; and with regard to the company, the reading, the theatrical representations to which we expose ourselves or our children.

(3) Again, expulsion is better than repression. We cannot expel bad thoughts by no thoughts. We must anticipate and forestall them by *filling the mind with good thoughts*. There is a saying of Napoleon's that we may apply to this matter :

"To conquer you must replace." He meant that it is impossible long to hold a distant country simply by placing a garrison of soldiers there ; you must plant a colony of your own citizens, and so make it your own. This, you will remember, is what we have seen in reference to the whole matter of Self-Discipline. We are to claim for their true and rightful use the faculties which we rescue from abuse. The mind we must fill with good and true, with noble and lofty thoughts, which will leave no room for those which are base and degrading. If it is true that "Satan always finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," it is certainly no less true that he will always find some mischief for idle *minds* to think. It was "while men slept" that the enemy sewed tares among the wheat.*

S. Anselm says somewhere : "The mind of man is like a millstone, ceaselessly turning, which is intended only for the best of grain—for wheat, barley and oats ; while an enemy, whenever it is empty, fills it with *sand*, which corrodes it ; or with *pith*, which clogs it ; or with *chaff*, which occupies it uselessly. So the human heart is intended for deep and peaceful reflection, wheat ; for consecrated devotion, barley ; for good resolution, oats. Satan pours in evil thoughts ; some which consume it,

* S. Matt. xiii. 25.

as wrath and envy ; others which obscure it, as dissipation and luxury ; others again which needlessly occupy it, as ambition and vanity."

Have, then, constantly good and wholesome reading in hand, not only what is directly religious, but that which will at once suggest good and helpful thoughts and will tend to discipline and brace the mind. We complain often of our wandering thoughts in prayer, of the difficulty of controlling our roving imaginations in times of devotion. It is not only a spiritual and moral fault, it is a mental defect we have to remedy. If we allow our thoughts to wander hither and thither at other times, yielding to a general listlessness and carelessness of thought, we shall be unable to concentrate our attention in prayer. We need to practice concentration of mind and fixity of thought, whatever may be our employment. Such as we are at other times we shall find ourselves in times of prayer. *

(4) And *pray for divine help*. It is the grace of God which must cleanse and sanctify us within and without. Pray in the words of the familiar Collect with which we begin the service for Holy Communion : " Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and

* See a most helpful sermon by Dr. Pusey on " Distractions in Prayer," in his *Parochial Sermons*, Vol. III., p. 273.

from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts"—how? by banishing evil thoughts merely? No—"by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit," inbreathing all good and true and pure and lofty thoughts—"that we may perfectly love Thee and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name."

This then shall be our prayer: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be alway acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord." * And this part of our Self-Discipline—the endeavor to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

* Ps. xix. 14.

V.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HEART.

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.—PHILIPPIANS, IV. 8.

OUR subject to-day is the discipline of the Heart and its Affections as distinct from that of the mind and its thoughts. To some it may seem strange and unnatural to speak of the discipline of the heart. Are not my affections free, spontaneous ? is not this their glory ? ought they to be forced, repressed, or crippled ? can they be made to order, or put under pressure ? I answer both No and Yes.

Nature, remember, is governed by law. The perfection of nature is in conformity to law. Scientific people are never tired of pressing this upon us. Is man, we ask, the crown of creation, to be an exception to this rule ? No ; in human conduct, as alike in the most minute and in the grandest works of creation—the flowers beneath

our feet, the stars above our head—true freedom is found in obedience to law. God's service is perfect freedom.* Liberty is not license, nor license liberty.

I must remind you again of the two great fundamental principles of Christian Self-Discipline which we dwelt on at length in the first of these addresses, which apply equally to the Body and its senses—the Tongue and its words, the Mind and its thoughts, the Heart and its affections, and (as we shall see) to the Will and its decisions.

(1) Self-denial, you will remember, we saw to be, when rightly understood, the sacrifice of the lower for the sake of the higher self. It is always a means, not an end.

(2) Christian Self-Discipline we saw to be not destructive, but remedial and educational. It tends not to the annihilation of any of our faculties, but to their enfranchisement. Its object is to set free machinery which is clogged, in order that it may accomplish its true and intended purpose. Two texts there are, both in S. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, that exactly express the truth. One, that which we took for

* The phrase of the Collect for Peace at Morning Prayer, "in knowledge of Whom standeth our eternal life, and Whose service is perfect freedom," is based on the words of S. Augustine, *Quem noscere est vivere, et cui servire est regnare.*

our first motto, which lays down *the law* of Self-Discipline : " They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." * It puts before us the whole of our nature, with all its various faculties, brought under restraint, into subjection. Not however for destruction ; but that being rescued from wrongful abuse they may be dedicated to their true service ; that, dead unto sin, we may live unto God.† The other text gives the corresponding declaration of the *Apostle's experience* : " I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live "—that crucifixion is not for my destruction—" Yet not I "—according to my own natural impulses, after the old self-willed fashion, " but Christ liveth in me "—the real power and motive of my life ; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live " by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." ‡

We apply this principle (it is really one) to the special subject in hand.

The Discipline of the Heart is not *to cripple* our affections. Far from it. The great and *fundamental law of the Christian religion* is love. Note it well, my brethren. When Christ gave the New Law He laid down neither a *negative prohibition*, forbidding certain forms of evil, nor a *string of laws concerning petty details*. He enacted one

* Gal. v. 24.

† Rom. vi. 1-13.

‡ Gal. ii. 20.

all-embracing, positive command, with a twofold application—"THOU SHALT LOVE." *Christianity requires the right exercise of the affections.*

There have been systems, teachers—mostly outside of Christianity, and always alien from its spirit—which have sought to stifle the heart's affections, which have represented a cold (as we should say, heartless) indifference and impassibility as the highest point of perfection for man. Such have regarded *pity* as a faulty weakness, *enthusiasm* as an extravagance and a folly, *joy* as a distraction. They have looked on all these emotions as defects and irregularities.

Far removed from this stoic ideal is the Christian character. To be "without natural affection" is one of the marks of reprobation, according to S. Paul.*

Far removed from this is the Christian ideal, the concrete embodiment of the Christian character in Christ Jesus, the pattern Man, the incarnate Word of God, who reveals to us at once what God is and what man should be.

Need I remind you how Christ our Lord exhibited in the highest degree all true affections of the human heart? They are reckoned as *chiefly six*—love and hate, joy and sorrow, hope and fear. Each of these is attributed to Jesus in the Gospels.

* 2 Tim. iii. 3.

Is it not written that He "loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus"?* that He "looked with love," His eye beaming forth the yearning affection of His heart on the rich young man with such generous impulses whom He would fain have established in a truly noble course of life?† The opposite affection of wrathful indignation is no less His. He "looked round about with anger on the Pharisees, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts."‡ There was the flashing forth of righteous anger when He bade the Evil One, Begone.§ "He rejoiced in spirit" at the revelation of the truth to the childlike and simple hearts of His disciples.||

In sorrow He shed tears at the grave of His friend Lazarus, and over the doomed city of Jerusalem.¶ His soul was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," in the Garden of Gethsemane.**

In hope "for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross and despised the shame."†† While when He offered up petitions and entreaties, with strong crying and tears, to Him that was able to save Him from death, He was heard to the removing of His fear.‡‡

* S. John, xi. 5.

| S. Luke, xi. 27.

† S. Mark, x. 21.

¶ S. John, xi. 35 ; S. Luke, xix. 41.

‡ S. Mark, iii. 5.

** S. Mark, xiv. 34.

§ S. Matt. iv. 10.

†† Heb. xii. 2.

‡‡ Heb. v. 7.

All true human affections were in Christ. He was *very* (*i. e.*, true) Man and *perfect* (*i. e.*, ideal and pattern) Man. They are to be found in us as in Him. In Him they were, in us they should be, *exercised according to right reason*. This involves two things: (1) They should go forth to legitimate and worthy objects; and (2) in due and proper measure and degree.

To illustrate my meaning let me point to our Lord's example in one particular.

Who can doubt His love, perfect and filial, for His mother, to whom He was subject at Nazareth, for whom He made provision with almost His dying breath, commending her from the cross to the care of His beloved disciple?

Think of the love of that Son for that mother—

“ A Son that never did amiss,
That never shamed His mother's kiss,
Nor crossed her fondest prayer :
Even from the tree He deigned to bow
For her His agonized brow,
Her, His sole earthly care.” *

Yet see the regulation of that love, and its strict subordination to higher obligations. When, in the course of our Lord's ministry, His mother and His brethren would have interrupted His work, moved, it would seem, in part by anxiety

* *Christian Year*. Poem for the Annunciation.

on account of the toil and strain to which He was subjected, how almost sternly does He repudiate any natural relationship, however near or dear, that could come between Him and the fulfilment of His Heavenly Father's work. "Who is My mother, or My brethren? He asked. And He looked round about on them which were about Him and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother." *

In this treatment of His blessed mother we have, it seems to me, a great illustration, an all-covering instance, of the true discipline of the heart.

We are to guard against unregulated, inordinate, excessive affections of whatever kind. Our affections are not to be repressed or crippled; they are to be exercised according to right reason.

All vice, let me remind you, is perverted virtue. It is in this remembrance that we perceive its real danger. Every vice is not only contrary to some virtue, its opposite; it is also a caricature, a shade, of another virtue. For instance, *Pride* is not only opposed to humility, it is a perverted self-respect. *Despondency* is not only opposed to hope, it is an exaggerated and

* S. Mark, iii. 21, 31-35; compare S. John, ii. 4.

unbalanced humility. *Envy* (blackest of vices!) is not only contrary to generosity and brotherly kindness, it is a wrongful use of the principle of emulation, by which we should provoke one another to love and to good works. *Sloth* is, of course, the opposite of diligence; it is also a caricature of that true repose and tranquil contentment which is consistent with perfect energy. *Passion* is an unhallowed love, a degradation of true and pure affection.*

* Compare Dante, *Purgatorio*, cxvii. 85, to the end, and the description of Purgatory in Miss Maria Francesca Rossetti's *Shadow of Dante*, so good a key to the great poet and stimulus to his study. "Each terrace is dedicated to the purgation of one of the Seven Capital Sins, the first three of which spring from Love distorted [Pride, Envy, Anger], the middle one from Love defective [Sloth], the last three from Love excessive [Avarice, Gluttony, Lasciviousness]. For Love, which is in every creature the fundamental principle of action, requires two conditions for its purity and health—that in its fulness it be directed towards the primal goods, even towards Him, the only measure of our love of Whom is to love Him without measure, and towards virtue which conforms us to His image—and that upon all secondary goods it rest in due measure, and no more. For thus it is the seed of every virtue, but otherwise of every vice whereby man turns the creature against the Creator. The Distorter of Love loves evil to his neighbor—if for his own exaltation he desires another's depression, he sins by pride; if, esteeming his own power, favor, honor and fame to be lessened by participation, he desires another's destitution, he sins by

Love then, and every affection of the heart, is to be guided, directed and controlled by Reason. The unregulated affections make war on Reason.

I. Here we come on a great fundamental thought that is seldom grasped—*Love is not irrational*. There is a common saying that “Nothing is so blind as love.” It is true to a certain extent ; but it by no means expresses the whole truth. Love is not critical, not quick to see blemishes, or fasten on faults in the object loved. Love is considerate and kind. It is content moreover patiently to wait for the explanation of something that may at first sight appear suspicious or strange. But there is a more profound truth in the proverb, “The eyes lead to love.” Understood not merely of the bodily eyes, but of the eyes of the mind, it is indeed most true—true of all love, human and divine. Love is always based on appreciation. It has been defined or described as “an affection or inclination of the soul toward an object,

envy ; if because of evil done to himself he desires vengeance on another, he sins by anger. The Defaulter in Love loves less than he might the highest good, and so striving after it all too slowly sins by sloth. The Exceeder in Love loves more than he ought some lower, unsufficing good—if this be money, he sins by avarice ; if food, by gluttony ; if sensual pleasure, by lasciviousness.”—Pp. 113, 114.

proceeding from a perception and esteem of some excellency therein."

"Such," it has been said, "is the frame of our soul that the perceptive part doth always go before the appetitive ; the affections follow upon opinion."

The question between different kinds of love, that which marks off the higher and nobler from the lower forms, is this : On what kind of excellency is it based ? Love always implies esteem ; but esteem of what ? Is it of physical beauty, or intellectual acuteness, or moral goodness ?

What kind of love do you, will you, accept or offer, my brothers and sisters ? Will you allow love that is stirred by a pretty face or a graceful form, a long purse, a position in society, an old name, or a sparkling intellect ? or will you insist that it shall penetrate the covering which envelopes the hidden man ; that it shall be directed to what a person *is*, rather than to what he or she may chance to *have* ; that it shall be stirred by intellectual rather than by physical qualities, by moral rather than by mental ?

Remember in proportion as love is based on what is real and high will it be deep and lasting. "A friendship," said Madame Swetchine, "will be young after the lapse of half a century ; a passion is old at the end of three months." The one is based on what is merely transitory, and with it passes away ; the other feeds on that the

worth of which it learns more and more. True love is not a passing fancy, an idle sentiment. It is based on the recognition of *worth*; where this does not exist, love cannot be lasting.

It is the same with all the other affections of the soul, its inclinations and repugnances.

We are to *rejoice* in what is a really worthy and solid ground for joy. "Rejoice not in this," said our Lord to the seventy disciples returning from their mission elated with their success, "that the devils are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."*

We are bidden "*Fear* not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."†

We must *hate* not the sinner, but his sin.‡

* S. Luke, x. 17, 20.

† S. Matt. x. 28.

‡ The love of good involves the hatred of evil. Bishop Thirlwall, speaking of Thackeray, and defending him from the charge of being *cynical*—which the dulness of many attributed to him—says: "I believe that nobody loved more everything and everybody that deserved loving. But what would have been the value or merit of such love if he had not keenly perceived and felt the difference between that which was to be loved and that which was to be hated, or had shut his eyes to the dark side of the world?" (I am not able to recall whence I copied this note some years ago. The same explanation I would offer with regard to other quotations, some conscious and some unconscious, in these and other sermons.)

In *hope* we are to set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth, and lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven.*

We are to *sorrow* after a godly manner, not with the sorrow of the world, which worketh death.†

All the affections are, I repeat it, to be exercised according to right reason.

II. If you have followed me you will not have supposed that I mean by the discipline of the affections—by saying that reason is to control the heart—that our love is to be cold and calculating, that love is the result and conclusion of a syllogism.

No, my brethren, in both human and divine love there is such a thing as instinct. The child loves God, as it loves its parents, with an intuitive affection and trust. There are instincts of the heart, as of the moral sense. Would to God we trusted and obeyed them more implicitly! But this I mean, that our instincts must be capable of justifying themselves to reason. An irrational love neither self-respecting man or woman, nor God will accept; an irrational fear we all despise.

The woman's heart again and again by intuition discerns a truth to which man's reason only attains after a long process of argument. But

* Col. iii. 2; S. Matt. vi 20. † 2 Cor. vii. 9-11.

unless the intuition of the woman's heart is capable of being justified to the masculine reason we have what we condemn as mere feminine fancies and prejudices.

Affection divorced from reason, when directed towards created and visible objects, becomes contemptible passion ; when directed towards objects that are unseen it becomes equally contemptible superstition.

III. You see now the point and force of the text which I chose for an address on the Discipline of the Heart : "Whatsoever things are true, honest (or honorable), just, pure, lovely, of good report ; if there be any virtue, any praise, think on these things."

The mind must be directed towards those things on which the affections of the heart are to fasten themselves. As faith in God goes before obedience to Him,* as faith is the basis of hope and charity (not earlier in the order of time, but in logical sequence), so with the love of all good things and the hatred of all evil, with the regulation of all our heart's affections and inclinations.

(1.) A word of practical counsel. In this light you see the importance of meditation upon God's attributes, His character, His words and works ; of the study of Scripture, of religious

* Heb. xi. 6.

reading. Thus we are to grow in the knowledge and love of God. "Thou art worthy," is the cry of the heavenly worshippers before the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

We love Him as we learn how He has first loved us.†

We learn to love Him with all the heart and soul and mind and strength, as we behold more and more of His infinite perfections.‡

(2) You see too the value of all good, wholesome reading, and the baneful character of all that is not pure and sound. Set before yourselves, and set before your children, whether in history or in fiction, in books or on the stage, whether in the concrete or in the abstract, characters that are really admirable—worthy that is of admiration, actions that are praiseworthy. The heart will be drawn towards those things on which the mind is accustomed to dwell.

* Rev. iv. 11 ; v. 9.

† 1 S. John, iv. 19.

‡ S. Mark, xii. 30.

VI.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE WILL.

I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.—ISAIAH, l. 7.

WE come to-day, my brethren, in our consideration of the subject of Self-Discipline (the discipline of the various faculties of our being), to the highest, deepest, inmost element of our nature, the Will.

The Will is the central element, the pivot, so speak, of man's complex being. It is in the possession of this awful but most blessed power of free choice and self-determination that man most of all resembles his Creator, in whose image he is made. It is the possession of this power that marks him off from the lower creatures. The animal has instinct; man has will. He has, that is to say, within himself a certain point of freedom upon which no external agency, no emotion of his own nature, not even the strongest and most passionate, no sway of custom can encroach, and so determine a man to will or to act that he can do no otherwise. Much as he may be influenced by outward

circumstances, inward emotions, or impelling motives, it is man's own resolution which makes the final decision.*

Whatever theorists may say as to the impossibility of freedom, experience attests the fact. I myself have done my own deeds, I know it, not constrained thereto by any irresistible necessity; I have willed them, done them.

The will, of course, presupposes impulse and desire. In its actings the will is swayed or attracted by motives arising from within or from without. It is influenced by a consideration of the value of the things which appear before us. Attractive objects are presented to us from without; impulses arise within prompting to a certain choice, but not compelling. Motives are not causes; they cannot force the will.

The familiar Lenten hymn well puts the case :

“Christian, dost thou feel them,
How they work within,
Striving, tempting, luring,
Goadng into sin?”

But the Christian need not tremble, need not be downcast; it is within his power to refuse, to

“Smite them by the virtue
Of the Lenten Fast,”

and its Self-Discipline.

* Luthardt, *Fundamental Truths of Christianity*, Lect. V., p. 141.

God himself respects the freedom of our will. He will plead with man and woo him, but He will not force his will. This limit He sets to the operation of His grace, and therefore to the effect of our prayers which call forth that grace. Were He to act otherwise He would destroy our manhood. We might then serve with the undeviating regularity of a machine; the obedience of children, of moral beings, we should be incapable of rendering.

We might, by way of illustration, think of the will as occupying a kind of *judicial position* and authority within the soul. In that interior court-house, within each one of us, it is the function of the reason (with which in part we may associate the conscience) to furnish the evidence on which the decision is to be based. The affections may be thought of as the counsel pleading on the one side or the other, often alas with more of subtle ingenuity than of frank ingenuousness. These must not pervert the evidence; they may set it forth and urge its consequences, but the decision rests with the will. Its judgment should be given according to the evidence thus stated and enforced; the evidence as to what is right, what is God's will; evidence drawn from the testimony of conscience, its leadings and inspirations; from tokens of God's Providence, from His Word, or the advice of those whom He has placed in authority, and so

forth. Here is the test, not so much of the capacity as of the integrity of the judge? When the will accepts such testimony as I have mentioned, and decides according to the evidence, a virtuous action is the result. But alas! full often sin follows in either a corrupt or an erroneous decision.

(1) There may be *an absolutely corrupt decision*; a verdict given not according to the evidence; a judgment delivered contrary to the ascertained and plainly proved law. The will decides for its own inclinations. With eyes open it commits high-handed injustice. We take the bit into our mouths. "I know that this is wrong; but I can not—yes, I can, but I will not—give up this pleasure, this gain, or submit to this humiliation, or shoulder this disagreeable task." This is what is called a formal sin, wilful and deliberate, as distinct from what is termed a material sin, which follows on *a decision erroneous rather than corrupt*.

(2) In such a case the judgment was given according to the evidence, or in accordance with what the judge honestly considered the true view of the facts. But these were wrongly stated, misrepresented; the evidence was untrustworthy. In this case the will decided wrongly when it meant to do right. There is a wrong done, but not a moral wrong. The will is not set against the will of God. The conclusion followed the

premises, but the premises were false. The fault was in the judgment rather than in the choice.

(3) Here again we may notice a distinction. These material sins may be *sins of ignorance*; sins, that is, moral wrongs for which we are in part at any rate responsible, because we ought to have taken care to be rightly informed as to the law and the facts. The ignorance itself was sinful, arising from negligence or presumption; the mistake was not merely a misfortune; it was a fault.

But mark you: where the will really meant to do right, but was deceived, it will be glad to have its decision appealed against and reversed.

We may understand from such an illustration of an interior judiciary *the freedom of the will* to choose and determine its own actions, unfettered, though not uninfluenced, by external forces. But we must always remember that *while free the will is not irresponsible*. We may carry the analogy further and consider that this judge is responsible to a Supreme Authority, whom it represents, in the carrying out of whose purposes and executing whose behests it rises to its true dignity.

Man was made in the *image* of God, in the structure of his spiritual nature, that he might be morally conformed to God's *likeness*.*

* Gen. i. 26.

He will be sharply called to account one day as to the way in which the delegated authority entrusted to his will has been exercised. Nor is he meanwhile left without a reminder of this. The will has (as we may say) as an assessor the conscience, to approve or disapprove its decisions.*

We cannot now dwell on the light which such considerations throw on the nature of sin and of holiness, or on the necessity of temptation. But one point I must just touch on. While the will is free, it comes more and more under the power of the desires to which it has yielded.† Its repeated decisions form our character. This is the great law of moral retribution.

“ We sow an act, and reap a habit ;
Sow a habit, and reap a character ;
Sow a character, and reap a destiny.”

The character is the radical impress which the will assumes from the series of its acts.‡ To use

* Rom. ii. 15.

† See Mason's *Faith of the Gospel*, pp. 105, 333, concerning the impaired freedom of the will in fallen man, and the restoration of its true liberty by grace. “ Fallen men have only the freedom of a diseased, not of a healthy subject.”

‡ See Rev. xxii. 11, 12.

“ Man is the self-characterizing creature. He alone of all earth's creatures acts not merely according to the

again the language of analogy, the will is bound by its own precedents.

You understand, then, that when we speak of the Discipline of the Will, we mean both its strengthening and its control.

Here we come to a most important distinction, which we often fail to grasp. We must distinguish carefully between a really strong (that is, a free) will and the obstinacy of self-will, with which we often confound it.

Is it not a witness to the depravity of our nature, to its fallen, perverted condition, that we have come so generally to identify the expression "I will" with the assertion of self-will ?

We are accustomed to use the word "will" in an improper and ambiguous sense, which is misleading and confusing. We use it not only for the power of choice, which is its proper meaning, but also for the desire of self-interest, by which that choice is often carried captive and held in bondage.

But, remember, strength of will on the one hand and strength of self-love on the other, though they are thought of as so much alike, are in reality poles asunder.

inward necessity of his nature, which is also true of plants and animals, but within certain necessary limitations himself draws forth his being in reality from the fountain of possibility."

A man who is determined to have his own way, who is ruled by self-love, shows not so much strength of will as force of desire (and that perverted desire) tyrannizing over the will of which it has got possession.

Let me revert again to an image taken from the civil sphere. It is as if the chief officer of a republic were to fall into the hands of a plotting knot or ring of self-seeking politicians; he is forced simply to register their opinions, to carry out their designs and plans, however these may fail to commend themselves to his own judgment and conscience.

What such a person needs is strength of will.

He needs to summon up courage to withstand the pressure brought to bear upon him. He needs to set his face like a flint, knowing that in steadfast adherence to the cause of truth and justice he will not in the end be ashamed.

Real strength of will is shown when we put aside our own inclinations, desires, gain, or apparent advantage, and are prepared at any rate to accept loss, humiliation, even death if necessary, at the dictate of reason or conscience, of God's will.

We have an illustration of both the virtue and the vice, of a strong will and an obstinate self-will, in striking contrast, in the story of the Passion. Behold Jesus our Lord standing

before Pontius Pilate. Pilate is the very personification of self-will, in both its obstinacy and its weakness.

As the Roman governor of Judea, Pilate had consistently shown himself self-willed and obstinate—a bully. One of his first acts after entering on his office was to remove his headquarters from Cæsaræa to Jerusalem. The soldiers naturally took with them into the Holy City their standards, bearing the image of the Emperor. This was regarded as an outrage by the Jews, who rose in revolt. For five days Pilate resisted the appeal of the incensed people to remove what they considered an insult to their God, and finally would only yield to force.

On two other occasions he nearly drove the Jews to insurrection. In spite of the warning he had received in the matter of the images, he hung up in his palace at Jerusalem some gilt shields inscribed with the names of heathen deities. These were only removed by an order from Tiberius.

Again, he appropriated money from the sacred treasury to the construction of an aqueduct. This led to a riot, which was only suppressed by an almost promiscuous massacre.

Of all this we are told by Jewish historians. *

* Josephus and Philo. See Farrar's *Life of Christ*, Vol. II., ch. lx. pp. 361-363.

And his character thus drawn tallies exactly with the picture which we have of him in the Gospels. There we see him distracted between two conflicting feelings. Hating the Jews, despising their Chief Priests, whose trumped up charges he easily sees through, he is most reluctant to let them to have their way. So in turn he taunts them, appeals to their national pride, their pity, their sense of justice; he seeks to evade the responsibility of pronouncing sentence. On the other hand, he fears to offend the Jews, who had already serious grounds for accusation against him. And so when all his shifts prove vain he yields, and gives sentence that it shall be even as they require. He is both obstinate and weak; strong in self-assertion, but weak in will, because without principle.

Turn for a moment to the Prisoner standing before the Roman governor—calm and unimpassioned, bearing testimony to the truth, witnessing a good confession, patiently and bravely submitting to every indignity and outrage.

With which will you take your place? Whom will you follow? Pilate, self-willed, obstinate, but weak when the question is of principle, or Jesus Christ, in whom you see the majesty of a really strong will—strong to do and bear, obedient even unto death; a will that can neither be

turned aside by taunt and mockery, nor broken by violence ?

His indeed are the Prophet's words—"The Lord God hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair ; I hid not My face from shame and spitting. The Lord God will help Me ; therefore shall I not be confounded ; therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."

Well may we take up the old hymn of the Church for Passion-tide :

Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle
With completed victory rife ;
And above the Cross's trophy
Tell the triumph of the strife ;
How the world's Redeemer conquered,
By surrendering of His life.

Before the Cross of our Lord in Passion-tide we are bidden " arm ourselves likewise with the same mind." * This is the homage, the homage of imitation, that above all else He seeks.

With this example before us of the Pattern Man, we will seek to develop real strength of will, begging both that we may perceive and know what things we ought to do, and also for grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same. †

* 1 S. Peter, iv. 1.

† Collect for the First Sunday after Epiphany.

With David we will pray not only "Make me a clean heart, O God," but also, "Renew a right (a firm) spirit within me. Give me the comfort of Thy help again, and stablish me with Thy free, Thy princely Spirit." *

* Ps. li. 10, 12.

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